

## Numbers 15 - Thursday, September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2010

- One of the most powerful truths I've learned and am learning in my relationship with Jesus Christ is that God is merciful and gracious.
- The chapter we have before us, though not evident at first glance, is a testimony to the loving nature of our gracious and merciful God.
- We're about to see how it is that God will, in spite of how their Fathers had sinned against Him, still bring them into the Promised Land.
- So now, He will instruct them as to what they should do once the next generation enters into the land the Lord is going to give to them.

15:1 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you have come into the land you are to inhabit, which I am giving to you, 3 and you make an offering by fire to the LORD, a burnt offering or a sacrifice, to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering or in your appointed feasts, to make a sweet aroma to the LORD, from the herd or the flock, 4 then he who presents his offering to the LORD shall bring a grain offering of one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of oil; 5 and one-fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering you shall prepare with the burnt offering or the sacrifice, for each lamb. 6 Or for a ram you shall prepare as a grain offering two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-third of a hin of oil; 7 and as a drink offering you shall offer one-third of a hin of wine as a sweet aroma to the LORD.

- Notice that the Lord says "when you have come into the land you are to inhabit," and not; "if you come into the land you are to inhabit."
- In other words God, in spite of them, remains true to His promise, even though the unbelief of the Israelites has delayed His promise.
- It's important to know it's the Israelites under 20 years of age that enter the Promised Land, but they'll be in their 50's when they do.

- Now, in light of this, He will allow them, of their own volition, to bring freewill offerings to the Lord because of their sin against the Lord.
- Again, at first glance, this may not seem that this is God being gracious and merciful, however, upon closer examination it certainly is.
- Here's what I'm thinking; "the Israelites are so rejected and as one has said; 'they're at one of their lowest points in their history.
- Yet, even though they've rejected God, and He in turn has forbidden them to inherit the Promised-Land, He still offers them atonement.

- There is a powerful principal to be learned here as it relates to our relationship with our Heavenly Father as a child of God.
- If there's not a reconciling, at-one-ment, after there's been a sin like this, the guilt and penalty of that sin will destroy the sinner.
- This principal not only applies to our relationship with our Heavenly Father as a child of God, it applies to our earthly parenting as well.
- It is so vital in any redemptive and healthy relationship that there be a closure of sorts, whenever there has been a sin committed.

8 And when you prepare a young bull as a burnt offering, or as a sacrifice to fulfill a vow, or as a peace offering to the LORD, 9 then shall be offered with the young bull a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with half a hin of oil; 10 and you shall bring as the drink offering half a hin of wine as an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD. 11 Thus it shall be done for each young bull, for each ram, or for each lamb or young goat. 12 According to the number that you prepare, so you shall do with everyone according to their number.

- This is interesting for two reasons, the first of which is that the larger the sacrifice was, more amount of wine was needed to go with it.
- The thought here is that with the bull being a bigger sacrifice when given as a free will offering, it would require more wine as well.
- The application personally is that the more we sacrifice in our offering to the Lord, the more the joy/wine should be there as well.

**Psalms 100** 1 Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. 2 Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. 3 Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. 4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. 5 For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations. NIV

- Secondly, it's interesting to notice that the Lord is giving them more detailed instruction related to these offerings than He did before.
- The thought here is that this is the grace of God giving them what they don't deserve after their disobedience, namely, more instruction.
- In other words, God is showing them His love for them in giving them this opportunity to wrong the right in and through these offerings.

13 All who are native-born shall do these things in this manner, in presenting an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD. 14 And if a stranger dwells with you, or whoever is among you throughout your generations, and would present an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD, just as you do, so shall he do. 15 one ordinance shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger who dwells with you, an ordinance forever throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger be before the LORD. 16 one law and one custom shall be for you and for the stranger who dwells with you."

- Notice there's no distinction between the native born Israelite and the foreigner that dwells among them as it relates to these offerings.
- This is consistent with Who and how God is, and that He is the same yesterday, today and forever. We see this in the New Testament.

**Galatians 3:26-29** 26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. NIV

17 Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 18 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land to which I bring you, 19 then it will be, when you eat of the bread of the land, that you shall offer up a heave offering to the LORD.

- Now we get into the heave offerings which were an offering of grain that was given to the Lord by "heaving" it up into the sky.
- For what would be deemed understandable reasons this may seem to be a silly wasting of the grain by tossing it up in the air like that.
- However, the thought behind this is to both give up and look up which would sort of cause them to focus on and set their minds on Him.

**Colossians 3:1-2** 1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. NIV

**Isaiah 26:3** You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You. NKJV

20 You shall offer up a cake of the first of your ground meal as a heave offering; as a heave offering of the threshing floor, so shall you offer it up. 21 Of the first of your ground meal you shall give to the LORD a heave offering throughout your generations.

- Here the Lord makes it clear that it is of the utmost importance that they offer up to the Lord the "first" of their grain as a heave offering.
- Once again we see this principle throughout scripture as it relates to our giving to the Lord "first" from the produce of our income.

**Proverbs 3:9-10** 9 Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; 10 then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine. NIV

22 'If you sin unintentionally, and do not observe all these commandments which the LORD has spoken to Moses --23 all that the LORD has commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day the LORD gave commandment and onward throughout your generations --24 then it will be, if it is unintentionally committed, without the knowledge of the congregation, that the whole congregation shall offer one young bull as a burnt offering, as a sweet aroma to the LORD, with its grain offering and its drink offering, according to the ordinance, and one kid of the goats as a sin offering. 25 So the priest shall make atonement for the whole congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven them, for it was unintentional; they shall bring their offering, an offering made by fire to the LORD, and their sin offering before the LORD, for their unintended sin. 26 It shall be forgiven the whole congregation of the children of Israel and the stranger who dwells among them, because all the people did it unintentionally. 27 'And if a person sins unintentionally, then he shall bring a female goat in its first year as a sin offering. 28 So the priest shall make atonement for the person who sins unintentionally, when he sins unintentionally before the LORD, to make atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him. 29 You shall have one law for him who sins unintentionally, for him who is native-born among the children of Israel and for the stranger who dwells among them.

- Now the Lord deals with sins that are committed "unintentionally," providing them a way to sacrifice an offering and receive forgiveness.
- The fact that God would devote this detail for them to deal with unintentional sins means that unintentional sins need to be dealt with.
- While I realize that this may seem to be a firm grasp of the obvious, I would suggest that this is a big issue that God takes seriously.

Significantly, the Bible talks about sins unintentionally committed; many today live as if it is unintentional, it cannot be sin. But many of the worst sins are committed with the best of intentions. Intentions matter nothing when the result is sin. Especially in the 20th century, all sorts of horrific atrocities and terror have been committed by those dedicated to honorable causes; Communism sought to establish a just, fair economy where each worked according to his ability and received according to his need - and became the instrument of the genocide of tens of millions of people. Today, in the church, many a gossip, many a talebearer, many a divisive person will claim the best of intentions. Even if we agree they have the right intentions, they still may be in grievous sin. The same applies for a myriad of other sins we are often ready to ignore or think lightly of, all on the basis of "after all, they had good intentions."

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30 'But the person who does anything presumptuously, whether he is native-born or a stranger, that one brings reproach on the LORD, and he shall be cut off from among his people. 31 Because he has despised the word of the LORD, and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt shall be upon him.'"

- These two verses pack a powerful punch in that there is no offering that can be made, nor forgiveness that can be received for this sin.
- Presumptuous sin serious because of its meaning in the original language of the Hebrew Old Testament. It's to sin with a "high hand."
- To sin with a "high hand," carries the meaning of shaking ones fist in a rebellious and even blasphemous way at, and toward the Lord.

32 Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day.<sup>33</sup> And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation.<sup>34</sup> They put him under guard, because it had not been explained what should be done to him. 35 Then the LORD said to Moses, "The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp."<sup>36</sup> So, as the LORD commanded Moses, all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died.

- Wow, the death penalty for wanting to gather some sticks for kindling a fire on a Saturday? Isn't that a little disproportionately harsh?
- No, and here's why; "this account of this man is included in the text as an actual case of sinning presumptuously with a "high hand."
- In other words, it's not so much "that" this stick gathering sinner broke God's law, it's "how" this stick gathering sinner broke God's law.
- It seems that while shaking his fists at God - he in total defiance against God - went ahead and rebelliously broke the law of God.

One commentator said it best when he wrote; "It seems likely that the ...story of the Sabbath breaker illustrates what sinning with a high hand means."

37 Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,<sup>38</sup> "Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners.<sup>39</sup> And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the LORD and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined,<sup>40</sup> and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God.<sup>41</sup> I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD your God."

- This is perhaps one of the most fascinating and applicable parts of this whole chapter in that it was once again God showing His mercy.
- These blue tassels on the corners of their garments was God's way of graciously reminding them to keep looking up towards heaven.
- It's as if God wants them to know that He loves them, and is merciful to them in that He wants them to focus on Him in heaven.
- What's sad about this is their doing this became such an outward show that in the New Testament, Jesus had to rebuke their hypocrisy.

**Matthew 23:5-7** 5 "Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; 6 they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; 7 they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.' NIV